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FRANCE: President Pompidou appears to have been moderating the French Foreign Ministry's dissatisfaction with American policy in the Middle East.

The French Foreign Ministry has long been frustrated over its inability to get the major issues of a settlement in the Middle East decided in a four-power forum. Since the US initiative was launched last June, the French have often felt left out of the decision-making process and have sometimes expressed concern and disappointment with the US for taking initiatives without full consultations.

[redacted]
the Quai went so far early in March as to propose a three-power session on the Middle East without US participation. Although the Quai is said actually to have sent out instructions for approaching the UK and Soviet governments with this proposal, President Pompidou's office supposedly quashed the project.

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Senior levels of the Foreign Ministry, where strong Gaullist sentiment still exists, are doubtless both resentful of the US and interested in demonstrating the independent role of France. They may also be discontented because of recent setbacks in the Mediterranean region generally. Right-wing Gaullist circles are rumored to have blamed Pompidou after the Algerians assumed control of French oil companies in February.

The French Foreign Ministry's inclination to adopt a stance that is out of step with American views has been encouraged in recent months by a strong Soviet drive to coordinate positions on the Middle East and other areas where French and Soviet postures may be compatible. It is a mark of Pompidou's influence and his desire for a balanced and moderate style of diplomacy that the French Government has nonetheless welcomed Secretary Rogers' latest remarks about the Middle East.

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